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AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

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PLAIN TALK ON NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

ADDRESS BY THE

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MINISTER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

TO THE INUVIK DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

INUVIK, N.W.T.

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I am glad to be back in Inuvik. I always enjoy the opportunity to speak and listen to northerners. Your town has been an important centre of northern growth from the beginning. It is becoming more and more important as time goes by. Inuvik reflects the dynamism of northern development - just as it also reflects some of the basic faults in development policy. That makes it a good place to discuss the northern future.

Soon you will have a year round road connection to the rest of Canada. Inuvik will be an important point in the highway system that is now taking shape. The Mackenzie will be one of the major highways of our country. It will link Inuvik, Tuk and the residents along the Mackenzie River to the continental highway system. It will end isolation for many. It will open the Delta and the entire region to year round transportation, reduce the cost of goods and services to individuals, accelerate resource development and stimulate tourism.

There are some in the South who say that the Mackenzie highway is not needed. There were some in the South who said Inuvik was not needed. Often these are people who do not know much about the North.

Many times as I visited the communities of the Mackenzie Valley the people have told me that one of their greatest needs was an all-weather road running the full length of the river. Northerners have been asking for this for over 15 years.

I have received briefs and submissions from the people of Arctic Red River, Fort McPherson and, of course, from you in Inuvik. I have talked to the people at Wrigley, Fort Franklin and Fort Simpson and they have all told me the same thing: they want and need a road.

All of them have stressed the need to end the isolation of their communities, and the benefits a road will bring in human terms - not in terms of development or of pipeline construction - but in the course of their daily lives and activities.

Now the road will be built. Our first task is to ensure that the job is properly done. Routes must be chosen with care. Engineering must take full account of the ecological dimensions. Northerners must be employed on the job, especially those living along the route. And training must be provided to ensure that northerners not only fill a job but learn a trade which will support them in the future.

Northern residents must also benefit from the business opportunities the road will create. We must marshal the resources of the private sector and government to enable northerners to take advantage of these

opportunities. The Small Business Loan Fund, the Indian Economic Development Fund, the Eskimo Loan Fund, the Industrial Development Bank and other sources must be readily accessible.

All this will take planning and coordination. We should not rush into it. If we do, outsiders, some well meaning, some opportunists, will be attracted into the Valley to skim off the cream. Of course, the North will continue to need people from outside, specialists and experts of many kinds. But clearly northerners must have a preference in their own land. And where they are not getting it now, we must make sure that they do.

It has become fashionable in some southern circles to call for a freeze on northern development for two, three or five years while southerners think out what they believe would be a better northern future. Those I call the "Toronto-Montreal Professional Northerners" would halt development of jobs and futures for all of you here. They sit in the comfort of their southern homes and offices and advocate a freeze in a part of the land which has as much ice and snow as it can use. They would have us believe that development is man's enemy and that the main hope for the North lies not in development but in abstinence. They would scare everyone out of their wits with vague threats of an impending northern cataclysm, threats that cannot be checked, verified or proved. They would

halt the growth and development of a northern life which they have no intention of sharing. Not for them the hard life on the frontier. Much better to stay in their armchairs while offering their advice to others. *(What only advising?)*

A freeze in this vast land would be a return to the days of neglect and indifference. It would make it impossible to achieve our national goals in the North. It would thrust northerners back into a new Dark Age. A freeze at the expense of northerners is no solution to any problem and this government categorically rejects the idea. Those who advocate such a freeze show little awareness of the views of northerners. They ignore the Territorial Councils and the local Councils. I have yet to meet a Territorial Councillor who would support such a course of action.

The population of the North has grown by 50% since 1961, a rate of increase almost three times the national average and the highest in North America. There will be a dramatic rise in the northern labour force as the 16,000 students now enrolled in schools enter the job market. Already the level of unemployment is much too high, particularly in the Eastern Arctic. Only 10% of the labour force there has reached Grade 6 or more in school. There are over 1,000 able bodied and healthy northerners on welfare for part or all of

the year. This is because of the lack of employment opportunities in both traditional pursuits and wage employment.

There is no challenge more pressing than employment for northerners. New job opportunities are the only alternatives to more welfare or forced migration to the South. Wherever I have travelled northerners have made it abundantly clear to me that they want jobs for themselves and their children - not a stagnant economy, not welfare. Simplistic solutions or superficial analysis will not put northerners to work. Answers lie in education and training; influencing potential employees and prospective employers; voluntary guidelines and where necessary, imposed obligations and quotas. There must also be a broader basis for the North's economy and diversification of employment opportunities.

There are some in the South who ask "Why the hurry"? "Why the mad northward rush"? I have visited all the northern settlements but one, some of them many times. I know something of how northerners feel. They seek development which is orderly and intelligently planned. And they want to be in the centre of it - not left out in the cold. Many have recently told me of their concern about this new form of paternalism from the South that prescribes northern solutions without reference to those who live here.

It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that some - not many, but some - of those who proclaim that northern development should be stopped are trying to shake the federal money tree; not necessarily to get research funds for themselves, but on the more general basis that at least some of the dew which falls will undoubtedly filter down to their corner.

Mind you we know that there is always more information to be had which is useful. If anyone has a good sound suggestion for essential research, I am fully prepared to listen and if we are not already doing the work, and if it is useful, I am quite prepared to see what can be done.

We all share a concern for the protection of the northern environment. The government's legislative record over the last two years speaks for itself. It includes some of the world's most advanced legislation for the protection of the environment. But this is not incompatible with northerners' pressing need for a growing economy. Of course all Canadians have an interest in the North, for it is part of Canada. Of course all Canadians have an interest in what happens anywhere in our country, but the people who live in each region have a prior interest. Since becoming Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, I have tried to end old paternalistic programs, policies and attitudes. I have turned over a great deal of responsibility to

the Territorial Councils who in turn have greatly strengthened the local Councils. They are becoming a strong part of northern life. This is the right direction for the future. I am not prepared to turn back the clock.

I prefer to listen to northerners - to democratic governments chosen by the people. To do otherwise is the essence of colonialism - the kind of colonialism which haunted the North's early days.

There is also a group in the North which has called for a slowdown or halt to northern development until treaty and land claims are met. There is no need to halt activities in the North to settle the treaties. That can be done - it will be done, whatever course development takes. We are not talking about using half the North for roads and pipelines. We are talking about a small fraction of the North's 1.5 million square miles.

I have stated before what the government's position is about Treaties 8 and 11. I want to make it clear again today that the government respects all Indian treaties and wants to see the obligations under them dealt with as soon as possible.

I have met representatives of the Northwest Territories Indian Brotherhood on several occasions and told them that I am ready at

any time to sit down to discuss the settlement of their treaties. They have said that they need to examine their case and to determine their approach to claims and treaty rights. I will not pressure them.

The government fully recognizes that certain obligations incurred in some parts of the country as a result of treaties with Indians were not adequately discharged in the past. That is why we have provided over \$1 million in the past two years for research by Indian associations. An Indian Claims Commissioner has also been appointed. He knows the North well. He was a Territorial Councillor for three years.

The government is now studying requests for further research funds from the various regional Indian associations, the National Indian Brotherhood as well as Inuit Tapirisat. This is to enable them to investigate all types of claims which they feel are valid and require study, and to assist them to define their grievances, develop their claims and bring forward proposed approaches for settlement. I believe this is reasonable and sound.

Native associations across the country have an important role to play in advising all levels of government - Federal, Provincial, Territorial and Local - how to improve existing programs and to devise new ones.

In this they act as pressure groups. I am proud to be the Minister who first recognized the importance of that role and who first made public funds available to these associations so they could speak out and act on behalf of their people.

During this fiscal year, \$7 million will be made available to Indian and Eskimo associations for their activities. Of this sum, \$800,000 will go to four northern associations. Over \$500,000 has been provided to the Northwest Territories Indian Brotherhood by the government since 1970, including \$60,000 for treaty research over the last two years. These associations bring to the surface some of the conflicting interests which exist in the North.

There are conflicts in all of our society because of the many interests in it. All points of view must be heard. But eventually someone must choose between conflicting goals. In such circumstances it is the role of elected governments to take advice and make decisions, governments in the North at the Federal, Territorial, and local levels.

I fully understand and share the concern that many Canadians feel for the future of the North. We all recognize that the objectives we choose and how we apply them will determine the kind of North to be inherited not only by future generations of Canadians but by all mankind.

Our concern should not be with development itself - for alone it is neither good nor bad. The consequences of development are what is important. We must ensure that it is of visible benefit and assistance to northerners, and that the northern environment is adequately protected.

The North is our last remaining frontier. Its development provides us with the challenge of avoiding the costly mistakes that were made in the South. In the North we must not allow the native peoples to be left behind as they were in the opening up other parts of the country. We have the unique opportunity of developing one-third of Canada's land mass in a way that places our concern with human values and the quality of life ahead of blind pursuit of profit.

The North can and the North must become a model of balanced and human development to which all Canadians can look with pride. That is this Government's pledge.

The groundwork has been laid for a comprehensive conservation program for the wise use of northern resources. You are all aware of the policy statement on government plans and operations over the next decade. The people of the North and the people of Canada can now see clearly the nature of the government's approach to northern development.

We have made a good beginning. And we are headed in the right direction. But in the end, our success will depend upon the efforts of you who live here. It is up to you to meet the challenge of the future in this, your part of the country.

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